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PROMISING PRACTICES



Family environment with practical behavioral healthcare fosters change and growth

Youths entering foster/group homes often bring a myriad of emotional and behavioral issues with them. Many of the youths are disadvantaged and have criminal histories and mental illness or substance abuse diagnoses. Unfortunately, a combination of frequent clinician turnovers, funding hurdles, and clinicians' inexperience can result in these youths not receiving quality and timely behavioral healthcare.

Seeking to overcome these barriers, [Community Teaching Homes, Inc.](#) (CTH), began providing family-style therapeutic group home care for youths with exceptional needs in four counties in northwest Ohio more than a decade ago.

Natural consequences empower youths' decision making

An essential part of the home environment, natural consequences can teach the best lessons in life, including social skills, anger management, and decision making.

However, letting natural consequences teach life's lessons requires good staff communication and judgment. Staff members must recognize when it is acceptable to let the natural consequence prevail and when it could create a safety risk to do so.

For example, before a group outing, staff members advise the youths to put on coats because the weather is chilly and rainy—although the elements do not pose any exposure risks. One youth does not want to wear a coat. Rather than engage

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in a power struggle over the coat, a staff member might say, “You can reconsider wearing a coat if you wish to stay warm and dry, but the choice is yours.”

A recent [CARF International](#) survey report observed, “The program’s ability to provide natural consequences to youths served has enabled change and fostered growth among this population.”

Community mental health center provides a continuum of behavioral healthcare

To complement the group homes’ family environment and to address the behavioral healthcare needs of troubled youths and their families, CTH opened a community mental health center (CMHC) where they receive seamless and continuous behavioral health services throughout the care continuum.

A CMHC model allows CTH to tailor services to each youth’s care plan. The youths participate in planning their treatment and setting goals. The CMHC also allows CTH to identify population trends and quickly adjust its programs to meet new needs.

CTH’s three core values—youth centered, family focused, and trauma informed—guided the integration of behavioral healthcare with the organization’s group homes and treatment foster homes. The CARF survey report added, “Through providing a family home environment and unconditional regard for persons served, many of those served have been able to change their behaviors to become productive members of society, thrive in the community, and have a significant impact in society.”

Collaborative services result in satisfaction of persons served

Last year, 92 percent of youths served said they were satisfied with their CTH services. Persons served say they feel they are vested in their recovery and part of their treatment success.

A previous person served summed up his experience saying, “My time in the care of Community Teaching Homes was integral to becoming the person I am today. Having everyone on the same page, from the teaching parents, counselors, group facilitators, caseworkers, etc., was beneficial in that everyone knew the case and together, as I was a part of my team, we were able to decide the best approach to treatment and therapy. The family setting at the home also fostered appropriate social skills and a work ethic that helped me upon emancipation. I’m well on my way to graduating college and gaining substantial employment, and huge thanks goes to the people at CTH.”



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For further information about Community Teaching Homes, Inc., please contact Nancy Harvey, Ed.D., LISW-S, CSWM, executive director, at NHarvey@CTHOHIO.org or visit the organization's website at: www.cthohio.org.

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